

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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R 170710 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3093

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

USDEL FRANCE

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 1973

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MOPS, PINT, PGOV, LA

SUBJECT: PACE OF LAO NEGOTIATIONS: RLG AND LPF
VIEWS ON COMPOSITION OF NEW GOVERNMENT

1. AT PRIME MINISTER' S DINNER FOR DR. HANNAH MARCH 16, DCM ASKED PRIME MINISTER AND SOME OF HIS MINISTERS WHETHER PROGRESS HAD BEEN MADE IN PLANNING FOR NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT. FROM THEIR CONVERSATIONS, WE PIECED TOGETHER WHAT APPEARS TO BE RLG VIEW ON SIZE AND CABINET POSITIONS IN NEW GOVERNMENT.

2. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOUVANNA, IN ADDITION TO BEING PRIME MINISTER, IS CONTEMPLATING HOLDING MINISTRY OF DEFENSE AND VETERANS AFFAIRS. FOLLOWING ADDITIONAL MINISTRIES WOULD BE ESTABLISHED: (A) FOREIGN AFFAIRS; (B) INFORMATION AND TOURISM; (C) INTERIOR AND DEVELOPMENT (LATTER WOULD INCLUDE RURAL AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS); (D) PUBLIC HEALTH; (E) PUBLIC WORKS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS; (F) FINANCE; (G) ECONOMY; (H) PLANNING; (I) JUSTICE AND RELIGION; (J) EDUCATION, SPORTS AND YOUTH.

3. EACH MINISTRY WOULD BE HEADED BY A MINISTER, AND ALL MINISTRIES -- EXCEPT FOREIGN AFFAIRS, PUBLIC HEALTH
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AND PLANNING-- WOULD ALSO HAVE A SECRETARY OF STATE. HENCE, EXCLUDING THE PRIME MINISTER, NEW GOVERNMENT WOULD HAVE TEN MINISTERS AND NINE SECRETARIES OF STATE.

4. SOME OF THE RIGHTISTS, SUCH AS NGON SANANIKONE, WHILE AGREEING WITH THIS CABINET STRUCTURE, WOULD PREFER TO SEE THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR AND DEVELOPMENT SPLIT INTO TWO MINISTRIES, THEREBY CREATING ONE ADDITIONAL MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIO.

5. MOST OF RLG MINISTRIES PRESENT LAST NIGHT WITH EXCEPTION OF SISOUK, THOUGHT THAT NEW COALITION GOVERNMENT WOULD BE FORMED BY MARCH 23. ALL MINISTERS WERE UNANIMOUS IN THEIR CRITICISM OF LPF'S FAILURE TO SEND PHOUMI BACK TO VIENTIANE TO DISCUSS AUTHORITATIVELY FORMATION OF NEW GOVERNMENT. THEY CRITICIZED LPF FOR MAINTAINING IN VIENTIANE SECOND-RATE TEAM WHICH CANNOT MAKE DECISIONS. THE MINISTERS THOUGHT THAT PHOUMI WOULD ONLY RETURN TO VIENTIANE 48-72 HOURS BEFORE MARCH 23 DEADLINE AND THEN WOULD BE INTRANSIGENT ON HOLDING OUT FOR CERTAIN PORTFOLIOS WHICH LPF CONSIDER ESSENTIAL FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT. SOME MINISTERS VOICED THEIR FEAR THAT, UNDER THIS TYPE OF PRESSURE, SOUVANNA MIGHT AGREE TO GIVING LPF SOME KEY PORTFOLIOS.

6. PHENG PHONGSAVAN SAID THAT SOUVANNA CONSIDERS MINISTRIES OF INTERIOR AND DEFENSE TO BE KEY POSITIONS BUT DOES NOT PUT FOREIGN AFFAIRS IN THE SAME CATEGORY BECAUSE LATITUDE OF ANY LAO FOREIGN MINISTER IS RESTRICTED BY 1962 AGREEMENTS ON THE NEUTRALITY OF LAOS.

7. WHILE WE HAVE NO DETAILS YET ON LPF NEGOTIATING POSITION, SOVIET EMBASSY OFFICERS ARE INDICATING TO DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS THAT LPF IS LESS CONCERNED WITH DISTRIBUTION OF PORTFOLIOS THAN WITH ASSURING THAT EACH MINISTRY WILL HAVE FIGURE SYMPATHETIC TO THEM, OR UNDER THEIR CONTROL, EITHER AS MINISTER OF AS SECSTATE. BY THIS MEANS, THEY HOPE TO FORESTALL RECREATION OF 1962-63 SITUATION WHERE PHOUMI NOSAVAN CREATED "PARALLEL GOVERNMENT" ABLE TO FUNCTION DESPITE LPF VETO IN CABINET COUNCIL.

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8. AS WE ENTER THE FINAL WEEK BEFORE MARCH 23 N IT WOULD

APPEAR THAT MOST KEY LAO OFFICIALS BELIEVE THAT NEW
COALITION GOVERNMENT WILL BE FORMED IN TIME TO
MEET DEADLINE IMPOSED BY VIENTIANE AGREEMENT.
GODLEY

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